

Financing university education for sustainable development in Nigeria: Issues and challenges

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Abstract

The paper explained the concept university and the objectives of university education. Sustainable development and its purpose were then explained. The paper went further to analyze the various sources of financing the universities, including; the governments, endowment, and consultancy amongst others. The role of the universities in the sustainable development drive were then well explained. The paper recommends adequate financing for the universities and incorporating environmental education at all levels of the nation's educational system amongst others.

Key words: University, university financing, sustainable development, endowment.

Introduction

In every society, universities are established as centers of excellence. The university remains at the apex of any nation's educational system all over the world. As acclaimed citadels of learning, research and overall national development, universities are inseparable from and indispensable to the developmental strides, of nation states including Nigeria. Recognizing the above, Adeogun, Subair and Osifila (2009), maintain that the entire intellectual and professional life of a country depends on sound education, especially university education that provide quality products (graduates) of international standard. The Nigerian university system evolved out of the need for the development of a high level workforce to confront the challenge of nation building after independent (Robert-Okah and Worlu 2013). Universities are therefore legitimate centre for the simultaneous pursuit of the goals of teaching, research, manpower development and community service. They are centre for high level knowledge and skill dissemination.

Objectives of University Education

The objectives of university education include; instruction in skills, promotion of general powers of the mind, advancement of learning and transmission of a common culture as well as meeting the needs of the economy (Harvey and Green, 1993). According to Osajie (2001: 333);

In addition to the propagation, dissemination and application of knowledge, universities in Nigeria are expected to contribute to national development by training high level manpower within the context of the needs of the economy. To this end, the universities ensure that the degree programmes are of minimum standards that would enable students acquire appropriate skills, level of competency and overall development that would enable them to fit adequately into their various discipline in the society. Moreover, appropriate procedures are adopted to ensure that the quality of the programmes are of the level that their graduates are well equipped for employment and for further studies.

It must be stated that any university worth its name, must constitute a gathering of first grade intellectuals, ready and capable of adding value to the nation's economy. This is done through relevant skills development teaching, research and service to the community. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2013: 54-55); university education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

- a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;
- b) Making professional course contents reflect our national requirements.

- c) Making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and information and communications technology (ICT);
- d) Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigeria Universities.

From the forgoing, it is clear that as hotbeds of high calibre intellectualism and value laden research, universities must be in the vanguard of driving the nation's economy. Life changing and life sustaining sectors of the economy, including; agriculture health systems, industries, general infrastructure and overall industrialization should continuously engage the attention of universities.

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

The word "university" evolved from Latin original, *universitas* as *magnistorum et Scholarium*, meaning a community teachers and scholars. University is therefore a community of scholars and students engaged in a complex task to which humanity looks up for overall human progress (Robert-Okah and Worlu, 2013). The university is an institution for higher learning with teaching and research facilities, typically including a graduate school and professional school that award masters degrees and doctorate and an undergraduate division that awards bachelor's degrees.

Educational financing refers to the source, allocation and management of public school revenues in the production of educational reviews in order to attain educational objectives. It refers to source, use and effective application of funds to solve educational problems and thus attaining the laudable goals of education (Okunamiri in Ayodele, 2006). Finance as we know it is indispensable in the lives of individual, groups, organizations and nation states. It is finance that enables government impact human conditions positively, lack of finance therefore becomes a major problem for individuals and organizations, and retards development and sustainable development. Lack of finance breeds poverty which impedes growth and development in all ramifications.

Sustainable Development

Nations the world over, have been striving to achieve sustainable development through initiating and instituting programmes to improve the way things are done. Sustainable development calls for constant effort to initiate programmes and executing them for the overall interest of the people (Akuegwu 2014).

According to world commission on Environmental and Development as cited in Akuegwu (2014: 634 – 635);

Sustainable development is development which meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a systematic concept relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society as well as non human environment.

The concept of sustainable development was originally introduced at the first earth summit held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. Here in Stockholm, representatives of government and nongovernmental organizations identified education especially university education as fundamental to the successful achievement of sustainable development. However, little progress has been achieved since then, necessitating the injection of a badly needed urgency in 2005 when the United Nations adopted a decade of education for sustainable development.

In furtherance of the above, the adoption included the integration of the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. The idea is that such an input will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity economic viability and a just society for present and future generations (OECD cited in Akuegwu, 2014).

The purpose of sustainable development is to provide a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members and economies are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving bio diversity and natural ecosystems. Planning for the ability to maintain these sustainable development emphasizes a desirable future state for human society in which living conditions and resource use meet human needs without undermining the sustainability of natural systems and the environment so that future generation may also have their needs met.

According to United Nations Educational scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), the principles underlying sustainable development include, inter generational equity, gender equity, just and peaceable societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation. The listed principles must be reasonably achieved before sustainable development can add value to the lives of the people.

From the forgoing, it is safe to say that sustainable development is all encompassing, cutting across all aspect of development, not a single or two year affair, but affects development at the present time, while ensuring that future development is not undermined. This would be an explanation to why countries strive to improve the standard of living of their citizens by ensuring that life enhancing projects are initiated to meet the

present needs and also laying solid foundations whereby the needs of the future can also be effectively met (Akuegwu, 2014).

Financing university education for sustainable development

Universities are recognized citadels of excellence the world over. They function mainly to disseminate unadulterated knowledge and information through quality teaching and learning. Life changing research and community service remain also the forte of universities both in Nigeria and elsewhere. In order to effectively discharge their mandate effectively, the universities need finance;

Source of Financing for Nigerian Universities

In the words of Okunamiri (2000), educational financing refers to the source, allocation and management of public in school revenues in the production of educational services in order to attain educational objectives. Educational financing refers to source, use and effective application of funds to solve educational problem, thus attaining the goals of education. The above applies to all level of education including the universities. The following are sources of finance for the universities;

1. **Government:** The various governments in Nigeria (Federal, State and Local) constitute the major source of finance for universities. It is painful however that universities in Nigeria are heavily under funded by the various governments, as they hardly meet the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of annual budget for education. The resultant effect is that these citadels hardly have enough to pay staff salary not to talk of research and community service.
2. **Alumni:** The alumni of various universities from time to time offer various shades of assistance to universities. Such assistance come in the form of finance and supply of needed equipment, supply of books and donating completed structures.
3. **Consultancy:** This is another avenue through which universities source finance. Universities offer consultancy service to the public (individuals, corporate entities and communities for a fee. Such monies however are most often small compared to the needs of such universities. ESUT consult is an example.
4. **Tuition:** Many universities in third world countries, get a huge chunk of their revenue from tuition paid by students. Many state owned universities in Nigeria belong to this category.
5. **Individual and corporate donations:** Wealthy members of society often donate to universities, same with large corporations. Such monies do not come often, and hardly do much to boost the finances of such universities. Some of these individuals and corporations also donate structures to these institutions.
6. **Endowments:** The government, organization or an individual may set up endowment fund for an institution into which contributions are regularly made for the running of the institution (Ikediugwu, 2007). Example is the Dora Akunyili endowment at University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku Ozalla, Enugu State. Such endowment are however small and do not help the benefitting universities much in the area of financing.
7. External bodies like TETFUND and ETF established by the federal government of Nigeria has been doing a lot in university manpower development through conference and scholarships for stay provision of facilities and cash donations
8. Foreign agencies and foundation are also doing their bit in university financing. Their assistance come indirectly in the form of aid to the country, or directly to the benefitting university. Such aid could be cash, equipment or personnel (Ikediugwu, 2007). In most cases, aid in cash is tied to specific projects. UNESCO, UNICEF, Rockefeller and Ford foundations have done a lot in this regard.

Miscellaneous Sources: University financing also come from such sources as agriculture (university farm and animal husbandry). ESUT farm enterprises remain an example. Also transportation business, like the university of Nigeria fleet of buses.

From the forgoing, it is clear that poor financing is a major challenge facing universities in developing countries including Nigeria. Fact is some of the universities in Nigeria can hardly pay staff salaries and other emoluments, not to talk of contributing tangibly to research and community development.

On the other hand, the leading universities the world over hardly depend on government financing. They are well funded through endowment, foundations, alumni and consultancy services. The list is endless. This explains why universities like Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Stanford contribute so much towards advancing the frontiers of knowledge, break barriers in research and make enormous contributions to community and societal development. Their contributions in sustainable development are also outstanding. Through

adequate financing and staff motivation, including availability of needed equipment, academics from these universities win the nobel price in the sciences (physics, chemistry and medicine) year in year out.

Nigeria Universities and Sustainable Development

It is easy could be said that Nigeria universities have little contributions make in the area of sustainable development. Many of these institutions are rather hotbeds of cultism, examination malpractice, sexual harassment, high level corruption and other social ills. Amao-Kehinde (2003), laments that nothing has shaken the very foundation of the nations academic community and threatened internal security more than cultism. The pertinent question remains, can true scholarship and result oriented teaching and learning flourish in an atmosphere of violence where the above listed social ills reign supreme? The answer is a capital No.

Most universities in the first world are research oriented. Through research, these institutions make valuable breakthroughs, discoveries and contribution in varied areas of human endeavour. Research teams from these world class universities conquer, such areas as space science and astronomy, robotics, biotechnology and curative measures for complex diseases. Nigerian universities continuously struggle to revive and looking for money to pay staff salaries. Strike actions and work stoppages are continuously adopted as tool for fighting for workers' rights. The academic calendar is incessantly disrupted and little time is utilized for research, teaching and learning.

As centres of excellence in research and high level manpower production as agreed by Dienne (2011) and Nwangwu (2007), universities have a lot to contribute towards community service and environmental sustainability. Universities are in a position to provide portable water and agricultural extension service for rural communities. They are also in a position to provide environmental friendly solar powered electricity for the rural folk, including health services against such ailments as malaria and other diseases. The writers are not certain this is the case for universities in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Adequate financing of Nigerian universities by the various governments and other sources will make the universities concentrate their efforts on the core mandate of high quality teaching and learning, research and community services. The governments could do this by raising the education budget to 26% of their annual fiscal spending as recommended by UNESCO.
2. Environmental education school be incorporated into the school curriculum from pre-nursery to universities. This is to ensure that everyone at all times is conscious and upholds environmental friendly practices and attitude. We can't talk about development in a highly polluted environment that is harmful to the health and wellbeing of the people.
3. To maintain peoples' consciousness on sustainable development, constant workshops, seminars and conferences should from time to time be organized for personnel (staff and students) at all levels of our educational system espousing environmental friendly and friendly attitude. The general public should also benefit from such fora.
4. The universities as centers of excellence should strive at promoting the following.
 - a. Balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life.
 - b. Meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life
 - c. The promotion of values that encourage environmental friendly production patterns. This enhances environmental sustainability and quality of life for the people.

Conclusion

Universities are recognized the world over as acclaimed centers of excellence for the dissemination of knowledge through effective teaching and learning. Universities also enhance the living standards of the citizens through research and community service. It becomes imperative that these citadels of learning should be at the vanguard of promoting sustainable development through all their actions and inactions for the good of all. Finally, to enhance the sustainable development drive the paper recommends adequate financing for the universities amongst other suggestions.

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